

CHAPTER III

LAND, LABOR, AND MONEY

• [241]
512
461

A PEASANT's life in spring and summer centered around the narrow strips of earth which surrounded the village. If the scene of labor was distant from the village, the tired workers who had been at their tasks since sunup often spent the night in the field rather than trudge the long way back home. In the middle of the morning, at noon, and again in midafternoon, the toilers stopped long enough for food, sometimes only bread and salt, and a little sleep. The burning noonday sun sifted through the leaves of the solitary tree beneath which the people sprawled. Fragile rays danced upon tired faces, old-fashioned costumes, a hand raised to brush away a fly, and oxen chewing lazily. Like animals the peasants worked, like animals they slept; but when harvest time brought an end to their toil they experienced the joyous satisfaction of work well done.

241

[134]

The average farm was about eighteen acres in size and was composed of sixteen separate and widely scattered strips. (See Table 10, Appendix I.) This land sold for a comparatively high figure because of its nearness to Sofia, but not because of any superior quality. In fact, most of the soil was sandy and gravelly, with a mixture of heavy clay.

[423]

231

241

[407]

In addition to a house in the village and his land, the peasant also owned a few animals and agricultural implements. The work animals numbered fewer than two for an eighteen-acre holding, and the plow was the only large implement found on every farm. More than any other joint operation, plowing had the flavor of an antique ritual. At dawn a slow procession moved from the village. The distant Balkan range loomed vaguely blue far across the Sofia plain, and the golden dome of Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia shone in the thin, clear light of morning. Behind the village, the slopes of

LAND, LABOR, AND MONEY

43

Vitosha and snow-covered Cherni Vruh, its peak, looked raw and wild. Against this background a trio of woman, ox, and man was repeated over and over as the households fell into line. The woman came first, leading the moon-eyed oxen which drew the crude wagon with the wooden plow inside. Behind them walked the man who was to guide the plow. He carried a long staff to poke the oxen when they grew sluggish at their task. With the stately pace set by the animals, the peasants walked as gravely through the hush of early morning as though they were moving to some pagan altar rising in the dewy fields. Time slipped back for me countless centuries when I saw the first spring plowing, for small boys had hung the oxen with garlands as though these animals had been meant for sacrifice.

241 ●

231

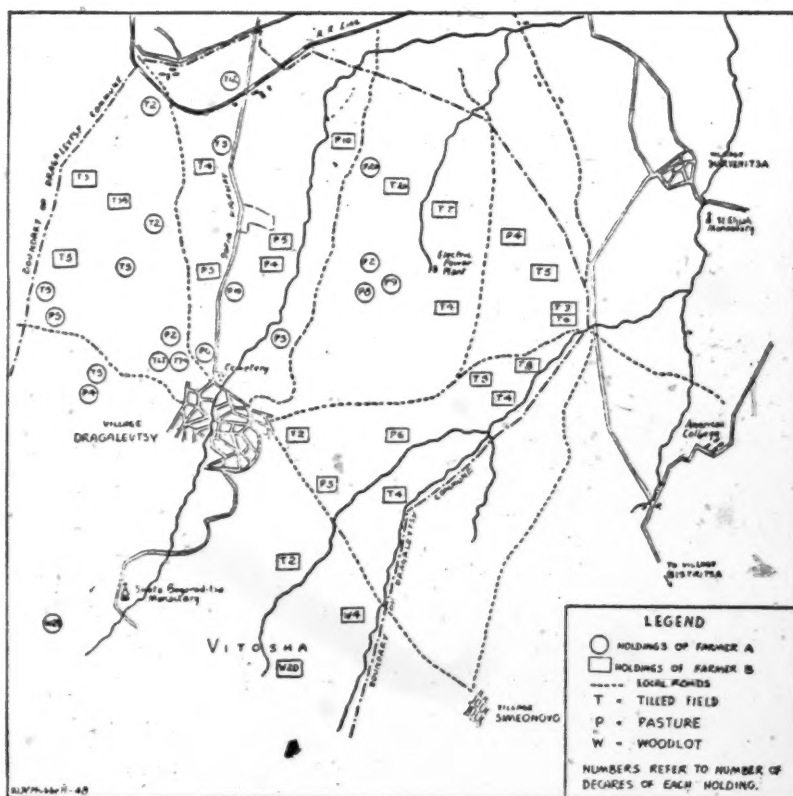
461

As the days passed, this picture had its variations. Black buffalo, with a cruel crocodile look on their faces, sometimes replaced the oxen; occasionally the woman was busy about something else and the man plowed alone. If the beasts got off the track, a flood of abusive language burst forth from the exasperated peasant. The sound of the language and the pitch of the voice were even more effective than the meaning. Not only in Dragalevtsy but all over Bulgaria, slowly and laboriously the heavy earth was broken with endless patience, for almost three-fourths of the plows had wooden shares, and oxen outnumbered horses four to one.

After the seed was in the ground the peasants left the responsibility mainly to God, but partly to the field policeman and his routine patrols. To ensure God's benevolence the village had a special day for a religious procession through the fields: the first Thursday after St. George's Day (May 6). Once the constant beating of the church bell coming from a strange direction attracted my attention to a spot about one mile east of the village. There was Father Sava, the priest, in his official regalia, accompanied by several boys carrying the church cross, the bell, a flag, and large icons. From forty to fifty villagers followed in a winding line. The procession stopped to pray for rain in several places where there had been insufficient rainfall. Later I learned that on one occasion the party had climbed almost to the top of Vitosha in order to fulfill the letter their mission of encircling all of the fields owned by the Dragalevtsy people.

527

241



Map of holdings of two Dragalevtsy farmers

527
731

Should drought be very severe, say in midsummer, the villagers asked for another procession and additional prayers to do more effectively what the May procession had failed to do. The need for such ceremonies was explained to me one day by a tavern keeper: "While the people know in their minds that wind keeps the rain away from their fields, they believe in their hearts that the cause of drought, like that of sickness, is the sinfulness of the world today for which God is punishing the people."

243

The chief bread-grain used in this region was called *smes*, a mixture of wheat and rye. It was sown by hand from a bag slung over ¹ [i.e. ensure a good harvest -- Analyst]

LAND, LABOR, AND MONEY

45

the shoulder. In late July harvesters came from other villages to help at least one-third of the families (the others harvested their own grain) to cut the grain with sickles and place the stalks in little piles. An old man, expert through years of practice, then made up the sheaves by tying together a bundle of stalks with the longest stalks taken from a previous sheaf. He used a round, pointed stick about fourteen inches long to make the grain compact and to tie the knot ingeniously.

243

Most of the grain was threshed by the hoofs of animals, usually horses, on the packed, earthen threshing floors near the house. The Karakachani, a band of Wallachians from the village of Yakoruda in the Rhodope Mountains, brought about fifty horses to the village at threshingtime. A peasant paid the equivalent of a dollar a day for the service of a team. The grain was placed in the center of the floor, near a pole to which the animals were hitched. Around and around the pole the horses walked until the rope's length was used up, whereupon they reversed their direction. Much grain was threshed by the machine owned by some of the wealthier men of the village, which was beginning to supplant the old-fashioned threshing floors. Some of the families still winnowed the grain by tossing it in the face of a stiff breeze, but many others had access to a separating machine in the neighborhood.

231

243

[407]

But this *smes*, or wheat and rye mixture, was not the only crop raised. Quite a few of the homes had garden patches, either in the yard or on the edge of the village, where peppers, mealy potatoes, cabbages, and tomatoes were grown. The white beans from Dragalevtsy were said to be the best in this part of Bulgaria.

241 ●

Some families grew sunflowers in order to sell the seeds for oil. Pumpkins from the cornfields were prized for use in a soggy pumpkin pie called *banitsa*. Fruit raising was decidedly underdeveloped, but the trees that were properly cared for produced very well. Straw for the animals was frequently borrowed or purchased from the wealthier peasants who had a surplus from the threshing.

The crop second in importance to *smes*, however, was corn. Of considerable interest were the groups of women who hoed the cornfield first in one direction, and a week later in a different direction. Varying in number from three to fifteen, these groups did

462

241

476

576

462 more than merely chop weeds and loosen the soil; they also afforded
 ● 241 an opportunity for visiting and conversation. A day or two ahead
 476 of time the woman needing help broached the matter to those whose
 576 assistance she wanted in her cornfield. She was careful to include
 only those women who would work in a congenial manner, shunning
 those known to be gossipy or quarrelsome. At four in the morning
 on the day of the hoeing the hostess had to go to the home of each
 guest.

"Anka, Anka," she called above the barking of the menacing dogs.
 Anka came to the door to greet her walking alarm clock with a cheery
 "Dobro utro" ("Good morning"). Since Anka owed the visitor two
 days of work for having helped with her cornfield, she readily accepted,
 hurried about her household tasks, and was ready to leave for the
 fields by six o'clock. Young women received many invitations because
 they could better withstand the summer heat. Occasionally, young
 men, upon hearing that their sweethearts were to be invited, asked
 the hostess the night before to call them along with the others in the
 morning. In the field all day long they had a wonderful opportunity
 to hoe next to the girls of their choice and "to tell secret things and
 to speak what they shouldn't."

461 Each woman brought her heavy, semicircular hoe and her own
 436 bread, but the hostess provided the vegetables and other food. Some-
 576 times the people were paid in cash for their work, but more often the
 work was repaid in kind. The oldest maiden was "at the post." She
 apportioned the number of rows and kept the workers from getting
 in each other's way. She set the pace as the workers moved in a
 line, side by side, across the field. Her word was supreme, and even
 the hostess kept quiet, although she might think the girl was giving
 poor directions. The hostess watched the time and told the group
 when to stop working for the three meals she served. The girl "at
 the post" gave the signal to resume work, but she did not urge others
 to work until she saw that the group sentiment favored it. If one
 woman was not ready to start, the others began anyway. But the
 niceties of etiquette were always observed: the hostess, who was
 profiting from the work, invited the group to stop to eat; a guest, who
 was directing the group, rather than the hostess,
 suggested that they take up work once more.

was directing the group, rather than the hostess, suggested that they take up work once more.

000

I spent many hours in the fields chatting with these women. There was a hypnotic rhythm of sound and color in their work as the line of black-clad bodies, and white headcloths, swayed forward together through the thin green blades. In the high altitude everything was sharply defined: the red-roofed village two miles away, the puffs of white cloud infinitely high in the blue, the strong harsh peasant voices close by. While the women worked they sang old folk songs about beautiful heroines and the brave Krali Marko, a legendary Balkan hero who carried out prodigious feats against the Turks, or of peasant girls knitting gay stockings for village boys. The songs were usually romantic and often were cheerful in theme; but now and then one was moved by a haunting sadness deeper even than that of the Negro work songs. Hour after hour I used to hear the unhappy music rise in its bizarre cadence; day after day for three weeks the corn was hoed in one field after another. Week after week the sun beat down on Vitosha and the Sofia plain, while summer burned itself away. The corn grew waist high, then shoulder high, and finally yielded the golden ears to the strong brown fists of some boy or girl at the autumn cornhusking *sedenki*.

461

241 ●

[533]

Early July was the haying season. Each sunrise would find most of the villagers out in the fields. Some of the men with their sharp scythes cut the hay in even swaths, letting it lie as it fell, to dry in the parching sun. Others would load the cured hay onto the wagons fitted out with ladderlike sides. As the wagons rolled through the village streets they were greeted by the little children who had had to stay at home with their aged grandparents or great-grandparents. The haystacks, whether left in the field or dressed near the house, were weighted down by lines to which heavy stones had been attached.

One could not be with the peasants long at haying time, or indeed at any other time, without sensing their feeling of close dependence upon the weather. In fact, I soon found myself sharing this feeling, although I remained somewhat dubious of the infallibility of the signs by which they "read the weather." They believed, for example,

787

821

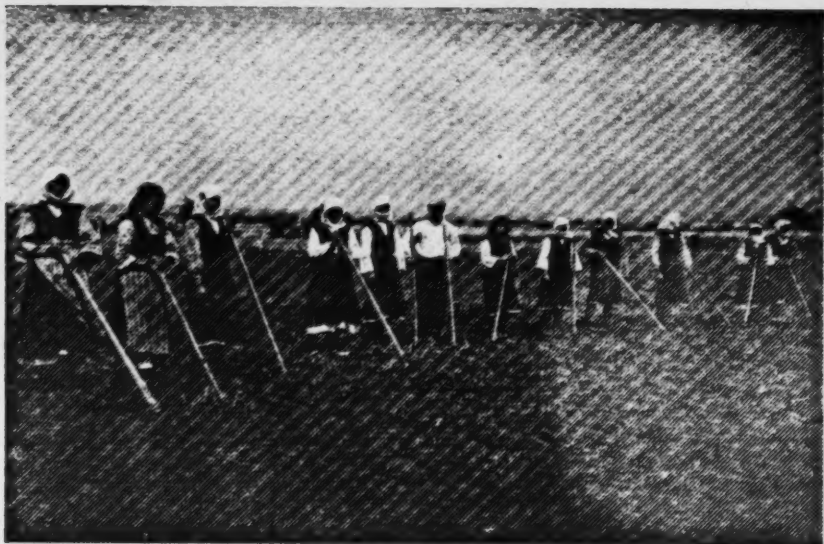
787 that it would rain if the crows bathed in the river, if the sun set or
821 rose behind a cloud or was surrounded by a circle, or if the oxen dug
the earth with their horns in the springtime. When the moon was
surrounded by a dark circle, the weather would supposedly change to
rain if it was summer and to snow if winter. Rain would also follow
if the stars shone brightly, the sky was red in the morning, or the
middle part of Vitosha was foggy. But the surest sign of bad weather
was the sight of pigs carrying straw to the sty at sunset. Yet good
weather alone did not ensure good crops. The human element was
of utmost importance.

464 Bulgaria had, according to prewar figures, the largest labor
● 241 supply per decare in Europe, with 5.8 workers available for 100
decares (25 acres) of land. Italy came next with 4.7, then Poland
with 4.3, but Great Britain had only 0.7. In spite of such a surplus
of labor the people had not begun to cultivate intensively. An in-
creasing number of young people therefore had to seek a living from
sources off the farm. Such intensive cultivation, however, would re-
quire radical changes in farming practices. Not more than thirty
Dragalevtsy families saved liquid fertilizer, although the rest did
haul wagonload after wagonload of manure from the stables to the
fields late in the winter to be dumped in piles awaiting later spread-
ing. There was very little harrowing, and what was done took place
in the spring after the rains.

243 The cornfields were plowed under at once after the harvest and
were immediately sown with grain. If the field had produced *smes*,
the stubble was plowed under to lie fallow for one or two years. The
fallow fields were plowed once in the spring, once in the middle of
the summer, and again in the autumn just before the grain was to be
sown.

What might be considered a Bulgarian counterpart of our Thanks-
giving feast occurred at the time of this fall sowing of grain. Early
in the morning the woman arose quietly to bake one large and two
small loaves of bread, and to catch a young rooster which she handed
over to her husband just before he was ready to start to the field in
the oxcart. What followed was the observance of a pagan fertility
rite. With the dignity of a priest performing an ancient sacrifice, the

● 241
476



"The cornhoeing groups . . . also afforded an opportunity for visiting and conversation." See page 46.

591



"The patriarchal system . . . won out" (a father and three married sons living together in a one-room house). See page 62.

stopanin, or male head of the house, killed the cock and held its twitching body over a bag of grain seed so that several drops of blood would fall upon it. He then drove slowly to the field to prepare the ground for the sowing, meanwhile eagerly awaiting the arrival at midmorning of the *domakinya*, his wife, dressed in her most beautiful costume and bearing a pan containing the boiled cock, meal, and bread. The family group made a tour once around the field, whereupon the man solemnly broke the bread and, before sitting with the others in the middle of the field to feast, gave pieces of the bread to the oxen. The peasants called this the "sweetest meal of the year" and delighted in having friends from a neighboring field join them in the repast. Summer's hard work was at an end; the harvests were plentiful; the peasants were deeply grateful. 243

Life in these scattered fields of Dragalevtsy was hard and laborious, but to the peasant, life without the fields would not be worth living, for these narrow strips of land were his children growing under his painstaking care. The land was his companion and friend, as he shared with it the thoughts and dreams of a starlit summer night, with a cloak for a pillow and dew for a blanket. Land meant more to the peasant than money in the bank; it meant more than food on the table; it meant life itself. 241 ●
423

Some years ago I heard a Sofia University professor say in a lecture that the Bulgarian peasant was more devoted to his work than to his religion. "There are more songs dedicated to labor than to saints," he added. Because I wondered about the truth of this statement in respect to Dragalevtsy, I polled village opinion. Here are some of the questions I asked, with representative or characteristic responses: 181
461
275

Nowadays, which do people enjoy most: working in the field or sitting in the tavern?

"People work to get bread. They can't earn money enough to save. Some prefer to work in the fields because we quarrel when we are in the *kruchma*."

578 But day in and day out co-operation was much more common in the community than conflict. Conflict was more colorful, it varied the ordinary routine for participants and observers, and it brought to the surface many causes of minor irritation. The character of village life, however, called for continued interchange of labor, implements, and even work animals.

527
241 At breakfast one morning Bai Penko told me that I had better go down to the school meadows if I wanted to see something interesting. The dog days had come. The peasants would do no work of their own during three of these days because of their firmly rooted superstition that fire would later destroy whatever they did. If they should use these days for getting in their own hay, it would probably burn during the autumn. Some imaginative leader had taken advantage of this traditional idleness by proposing that every family send a member down to the school meadows to mow and stack the hay which was later to be sold for the benefit of the local school. The villagers obliged with the mental reservation that it was no concern of theirs if the school's hay burned before it could be sold to the commission merchants.

Even before I had finished my pale cocoa made of sheep's milk, some of the tavern faithful began to drift in. It was already hot outside, so hot that the men rejoiced because they did not have to go down to the meadow in the broiling sun. One patriarch had trouble persuading a daughter-in-law to represent the family, but she had agreed to go if he would buy her the pair of new shoes he had been promising her; another said his son wanted to go because he thought it would be more fun down there than hanging around the house. Such remarks as these spurred me on my way.

I had gone only a hundred yards before I caught up with a housewife headed for the meadow, a wooden pitchfork over her shoulder. She was not looking forward to the toil ahead of her, because she wanted to work in her vegetable garden, dog days or no dog days.

Even before I reached the group I saw them hard at work. Rows of men were wielding scythes, rhythmically and unhurriedly advancing together without leaving an erect blade of grass between them.

Women, their kerchiefs loosely drawn over their heads, turned the swaths of hay that had been curing. The younger people, displaying an amazing amount of energy and enthusiasm in such sultry weather, collected the dried grass first in small piles, next in larger piles, and then several joined forces to scoot these heaps of hay across the field to the nearest stack. This scooting was the center of the day's hilarity, for it was always accompanied by shouts of triumph ("Look what a big pile we have"), and warning ("You'd better get out of our way; we're coming"). The scoot usually ended in several youngsters taking a terrific tumble, but they did not seem to mind falling in the sweet-smelling new-mown hay.

The large stacks conveniently placed around the forty-acre meadow were dressed without a wasted movement by men who remained on top and were lifted higher as the stack grew in size. By the end of the afternoon some of the stacks had grown so large that the men on top had to be helped down.

A little before lunch time the priest and the mayor came strolling across the fields swinging their canes like true intelligentsia. They exchanged friendly comments with all the people they passed. They continued on across the meadow to a tavern on the Sofia road, returning eventually with two jugs of *rakiya* and a bag of fruit for those who spurned brandy.

Lunch time was quiet except when some boy played a trick on a dozing neighbor and got an angry protest in exchange. The only shade was directly next to the stacks, so most of the people had to endure the sun even while they rested. Trees were a mile away. As the afternoon wore on, the desire to get a big patch finished overcame the natural fatigue setting in. The captains, appointed by the mayor to control the activities of the people from their respective neighborhoods, stirred up the spirit of competition, and the stacks grew larger and larger. At length all the cut hay had been piled and we began to leave the field as the sun was setting behind the mountain: The towering stacks stood motionless, symbolic of that co-operation which is the heart of communal life everywhere.

527

241 ●

THE NATIONAL STATE

167

6. that I have been registered under No. _____ in the election list of the commune.

I wish to have my candidacy recognized as legal and confirmed.

I enclose certificate No. _____ from _____ 19__ year issued from _____ commune, which shows that:

- (a) I have the right to elections (commune elections)
 - (b) that I am 30 years of age and have completed my military service (or the regular labor service)
 - (c) that I have completed _____ (education)
- Village, City _____ year 19__

Respectfully: _____

The names of those wishing to run were posted publicly by the mayor; all the villagers had the opportunity to contest the fitness of any candidate; afterwards the mayor sent the names to Sofia with his own recommendations. The final decision was in the hands of the judge in Sofia. Thirteen Dragalevtsy men decided to stand for election. Three of these were rejected by the authorities. People from each district voted only for a candidate from their district. Mothers were the only women permitted to vote.

Before the election, with the permission of the mayor, the candidates were allowed to make speeches. After the election, as is frequently the case in countries elsewhere, some people were dissatisfied with the results and demanded a new election. However, everything seemed to go off in an orderly way and the voting was fairly done. This election, though, was the prelude to the national elections which were later held, resulting in the restoration, after a fashion, of the *Subranie*, or National Parliament.

Re-establishing a commune council seemed to be a very complicated affair to the average peasant, and afforded quite a contrast to his usual way of getting things done. In order to fulfill the law requiring ex officio members to represent the merchants and the agriculturists, two new organizations had to be started in the village before the time of the election. The merchants organized a Merchants' Association, had one or two meetings, elected a representative, and discussed general policies for the future. Although nothing definite had taken shape by the time I left the village, the merchants hoped to

666
623

623
441
241 ●

623 practice price-fixing, standardization of products, and the like. The
 441 representative appointed by the merchants was Ivan Katsarov, previ-
 241 ously mentioned as a manager of one of the village taverns who ap-
 appeared as a plaintiff in court. Furthermore, the farmers had to organize
 themselves into an association called a zadruga (which had no con-
 nection with the old form of joint family known by that name). Such
 organizations followed the Italian system of corporations under the
 Fascist regime and insured representation in government on the basis
 of occupation rather than political preference. These agricultural
 zadrugas worked well in theory around the council tables in Sofia, but
 met with resistance in the village. In the opinion of many leaders of
 co-operatives, the zadrugas ran counter to the strong co-operative move-
 ment which had already made such headway in Bulgaria. Their critics
 point out they not only struck at the very foundation of this move-
 ment, but also had the fault of being handed down from above instead
 of springing from natural needs in the village itself.

623 Should there have been a number of industrial laborers in the
 village they too would have had an ex officio member on the council.
 The presence of the other ex officio members on the council was easily
 understood. The doctors, the school director, and the mayor were
 expected by the national authorities to take an active part in deciding
 the policies of the village government. Such a council, in spite of
 the great furor connected with its formation, was still an advisory
 rather than a governing body.

In order to get a better understanding of the way government
 affected the life of the individual peasant, I sought answers to several
 questions.

651 *How were the taxes paid?* On February 25, July 25, and October
 25, people were supposed to come to the *Obshtina* and pay taxes. Those
 who did not show up were summoned by the courier. If this summons
 went unheeded, the individuals were sent red notices reminding them
 that they had to pay within three or four days. If they failed to do
 this, the *Sekretar Birnik* made out a list of their possessions for a public
 sale which was held if the taxes remained unpaid. There had been
 several instances where goods were actually sold for failure to pay
 taxes, much to the shame of the people involved.

TABLE 7.

LENGTH OF ENGAGEMENT PERIOD, DRAGALEVTSY, 1935*

No engagement	1 couple
"Short"	3 couples
1 day	1 couple
3 days	1 couple
1 week	18 couples
10 days	1 couple
2 weeks	3 couples
6 weeks	1 couple
8 weeks	1 couple

* Information gotten from people selected at random.
They were of varying ages and had been married
for varying periods of time.

B. TABLES ABOUT THE FARMS

TABLE 8

SIZE OF HOLDINGS OF DRAGALEVTSY FARMERS, WITH
NUMBER ENTIRELY OWNED, CENSUS OF 1926*

SIZE OF HOLDING (DECARES†)	NUMBER OF FARMS	TOTAL DECARES	NUMBER OF FARMS OWNED	TOTAL DECARES OWNED
0- 10.....	12	35.2	11	32.2
10- 20.....	14	237.5	14	237.5
20- 30.....	27	674.9	26	654.6
30- 40.....	32	1,147.1	29	1,048.4
40- 50.....	21	947.3	21	947.3
50- 60.....	24	1,319.4	22	1,206.3
60- 70.....	17	1,104.0	17	1,104.0
70- 80.....	19	1,429.8	17	1,276.7
80- 90.....	7	589.7	7	589.7
90-100.....	7	657.3	7	657.3
100-150.....	37	4,300.2	34	3,950.6
150-200.....	13	2,191.8	13	2,191.8
200-300.....	2	492.7	2	492.7
Total.....	232	15,126.9	220	14,388.6
Per cent owned...			94.8	95.1

* Monastery farm of 1,176.1 decares omitted from table.

† 1 decare is $\frac{1}{4}$ acre.

584

• 241
423

These figures show how strongly the people are attached to the cultivation of the land. The background of Bulgarian culture was and still is agricultural labour. 162

44. Bulgaria is a Land of small Ownerships. This is the Background of her Democracy.

Let us show the variety of occupations in Bulgaria. The occupations of 1,284,993 households¹⁾ in Bulgaria are distributed as follows:

	Households	%
Agriculture	838.899	or 65.2
Manufacture of materials	160.000	12.4
Commerce and credit	61.518	4.8
Public work and service	38.762	3.0
Transport and communications	36.682	2.9
Science and education	20.114	1.7

The distribution of land property will be shown in the figures below. The total of private properties being 42,810,815 dekaras equal to 100%, the distribution is as follows: 423

Husbandries up to 10 decares ²⁾	1.3%
" from 10 to 20 decares	4.0%
" 20 " 30 "	6.6%
" 30 " 50 "	18.1%
" 50 " 100 "	36.9%
" 100 " 150 "	17.0%
" 150 " 200 "	7.3%
" 200 " 300 "	5.2%
" 300 " 500 "	2.0%
" 500 and more	1.6%

Since at present Bulgaria could not rely on more guaranteed sources of income for her economy, than those which are connected with her agriculture; along with the efforts laid for the improvement of crafts and industries, the Government takes special care for the agriculture of the country, as the main support of the state and the main background of the democracy of her agrarian population. 241
311

How is land worked in Bulgaria? The private and public land for exploitation being 43,684,381 decares equal to 100%, its distribution is as follows:

¹⁾ This information is based on statistics for 1934, which is the last census year.

²⁾ One decare = 0.247 acres. One acre = 4.047 decares.

241
311

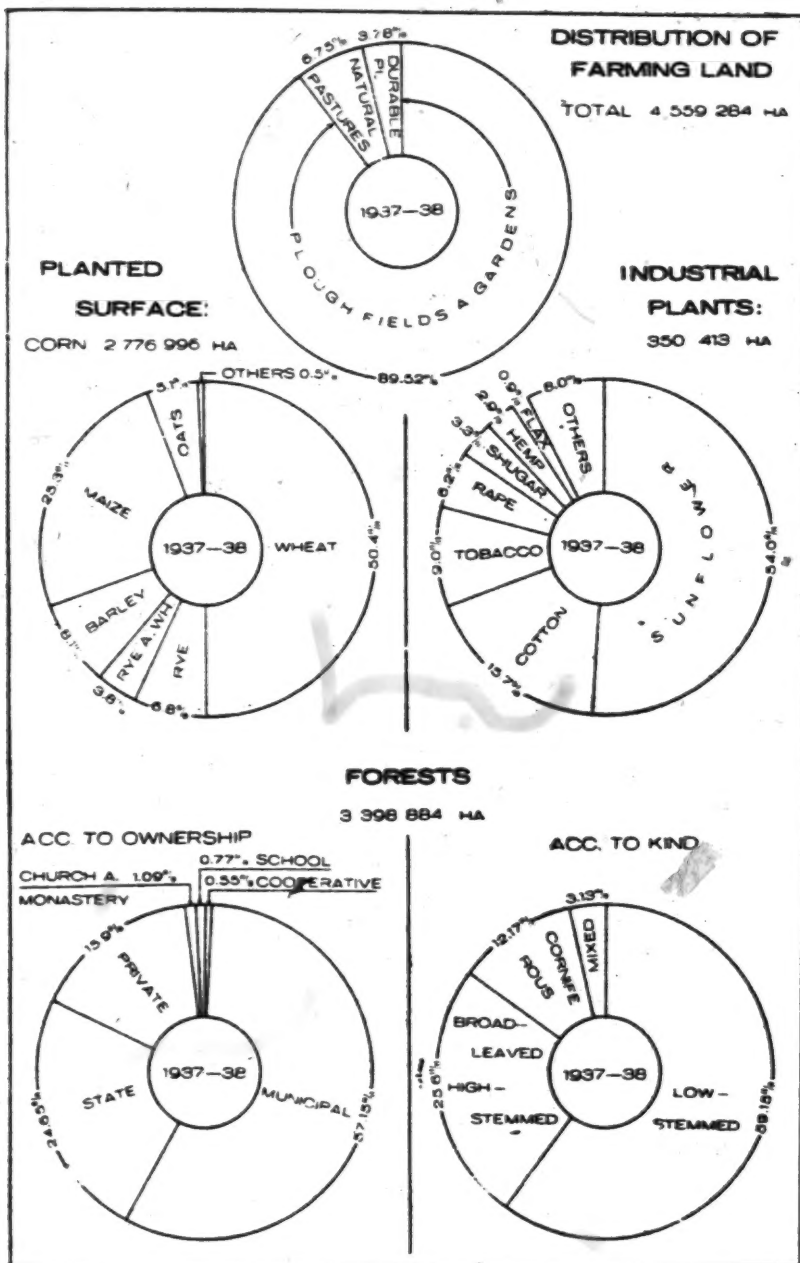


Fig. 16.

a. Land for cultivation	89.10 %
plough fields	79.40 %
vegetable gardens	0.45 %
vineyards	2.48 %
vine nurseries	0.008 %
orchards	0.52 %
mulberry orchards	0.01 %
rose fields	0.02 %
meadows	6.02 %
b. Land — not cultivated	10.90 %
pastures	1.72 %
forests	8.49 %
deserted land	0.69 %
other	0.06 %

241
311

45. Agricultural Production.

The distribution of the total country's production is given in percentage values, as follows:

241

	1907-1911	1930-1934
grain	62.18 %	58.05 %
industrial plants	1.80	9.68
beans, peas etc.	2.26	2.25
potatoes	0.27	0.96
vegetables	1.87	1.78
forage plants	18.58	15.89
vineyards	10.30	8.45
orchards	1.03	1.40
rose fields	0.69	—
mulberry orchards	0.07	0.13

The above figures show how Bulgarian agriculture turned to more accessible marketing and higher priced products. This situation continues at the present time. The change is evident also from the following figures showing the movement of the country's export after 1911 (vidi Fig. 17 and 18):

ANNUAL AVERAGE

	1907-1911	1937	1938	1939
	amounts in metric tons			
grain	530.404	329.476	172.935	176.635
leaf tobacco	2.051	22.798	33.553	34.761
oleaginous seeds	4.222	64.854	—	43.699
miscellaneous (remnants)	118	45.151	38.961	30.965
fresh vegetables	97	7.359	6.842	8.012
dried vegetables	432	1.192	—	4.364
fresh fruit	1.188	39.890	77.196	72.133
canned fruit	300	7.500	23.296	50.746
wine	8	31	87	19.710

241
439

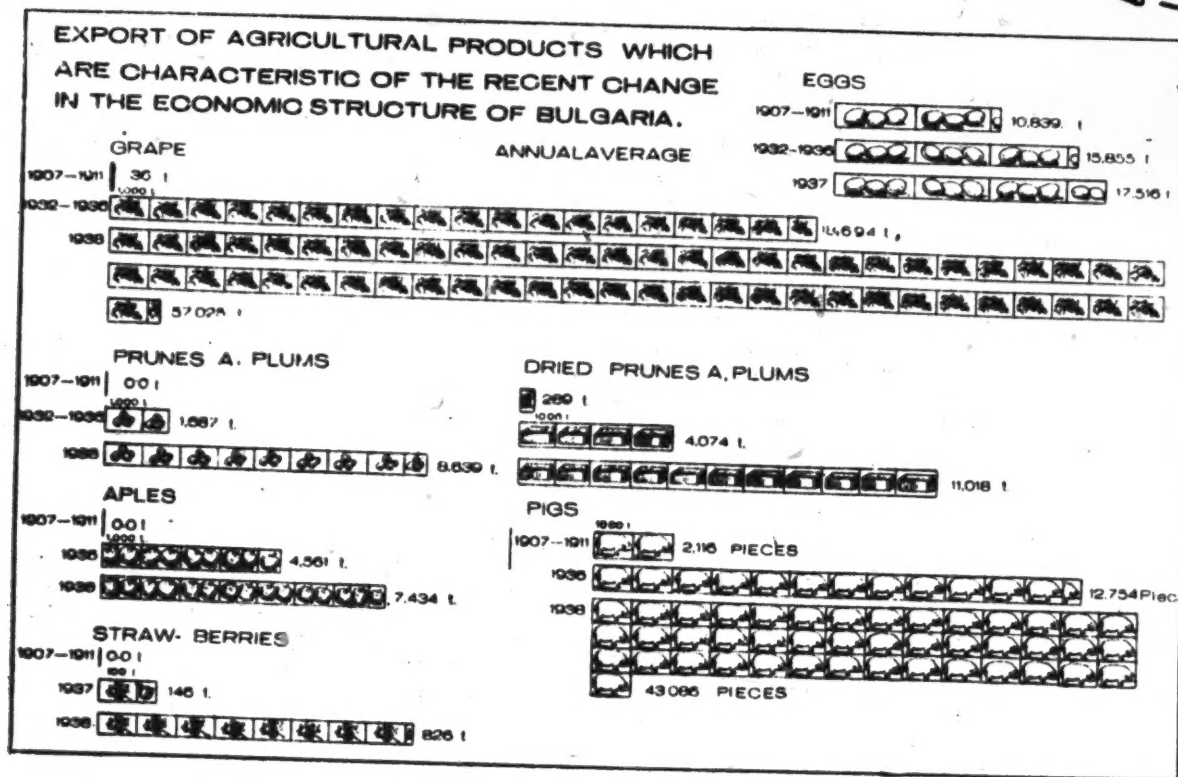


Fig. 17.

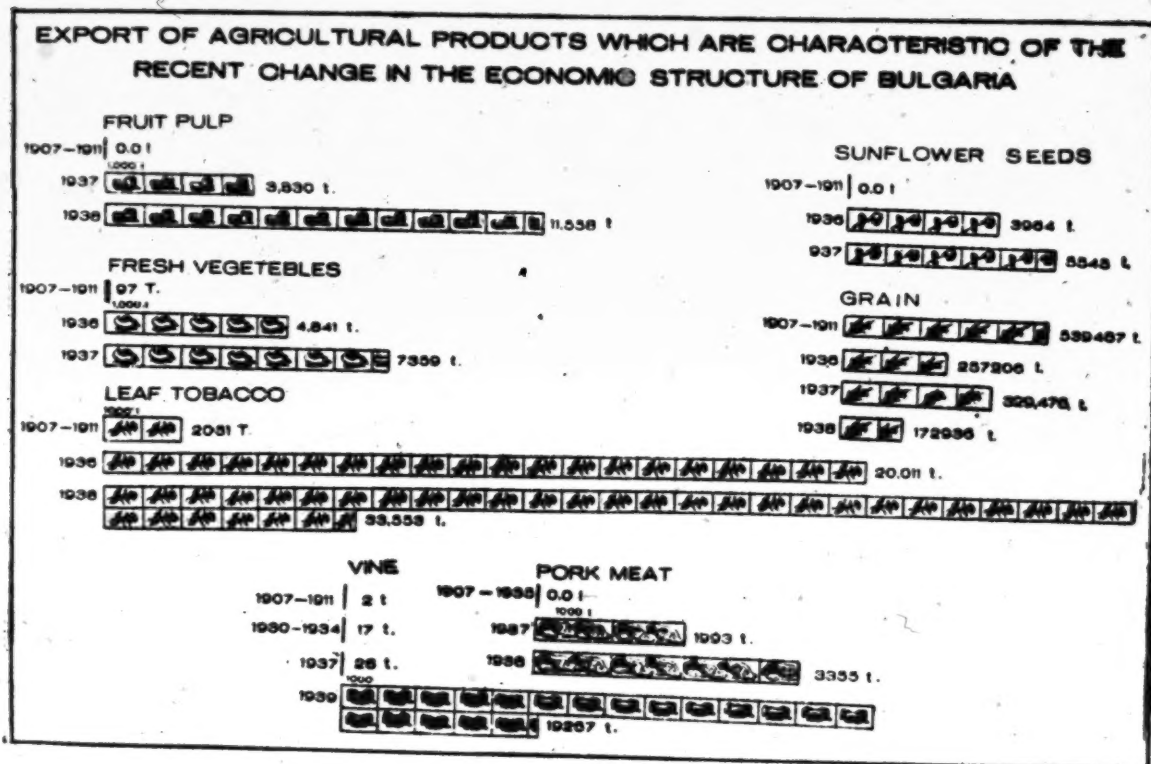


Fig. 18.

241
439

AGRICULTURE

It is impossible to treat adequately in the limited 241 • space of a chapter a subject of such capital importance for Bulgaria as its agriculture, which is its staple industry and which forms the occupation of some 80% of her population, and only a brief and superficial survey can be given. To those who are interested in the subject, the works of Prof. N. V. Dolinski, of the École des Hautes Etudes Commerciales of Varna are recommended, who has treated this theme with an insight and comprehension worthy of the savant he is. Prof. Dolinski, being a Russian and former professor at the Polytechnical Institute of St. Petersburg, has studied thoroughly every aspect of this subject and the conclusions he has arrived at as to the future of Bulgarian agriculture are not optimistic. He thus differs from most Bulgarians, who being temperamentally over-confident, and somewhat unconscious of their limitations, take an over sanguine outlook as to the future, believing as they do, that persevering and unremitting labour can surmount every obstacle.

Bulgaria, as is well known, is a country of small holders; according to the census of 1926, the 4,469,987.02 241 hectares of cultivated surface was divided among 734,191 423 individual farmsteads, each of an average area slightly over 6 hectares¹. The tendency however has been towards further subdivision. In 1929 the number of independent holdings had grown to 807,309, and by 1931 to 840,900. The progressive segmentation of the farmsteads is an evil which eventually will have to be stopped through the adoption of the right of primogeniture concerning landed property, or by some other means. As matters stand, there are very few sons of farmers willing to continue their

¹ The following table gives detailed figures as to the size and number of the holdings:

BULGARIA-PAST & PRESENT

241
423

Area of farmsteads	Number of owners	% of total	Number of hectares	% of total
1 to 2 hectares	86,323	11.8	429,153	0.9
2 to 3 "	90,418	12.3	1,326,784	3
3 to 4 "	88,064	12	2,166,102	4.8
4 to 5 "	72,011	9.8	3,211,065	7.2
5 to 6 "	59,714	8.1	3,250,262	7.3
6 to 7 "	49,287	6.7	3,178,436	7.1
7 to 8 "	39,480	5.4	2,946,641	6.6
8 to 9 "	32,614	4.4	2,777,252	6.2
9 to 10 "	25,462	3.5	2,408,585	5.4
10 to 15 "	68,724	9.4	8,260,854	18.5
15 to 20 "	23,281	3.2	3,976,965	8.9
20 to 25 "	9,092	1.2	2,001,162	4.5
25 to 30 "	3,605	0.5	1,034,139	2.3
over 30 "	4,766	0.6	4,974,404	11
Total	734,191	100	44,692,987	100

parents' calling because they know that at the latter's death, the farmstead will have to be divided among all the members of the family, and that the portion which will revert to them will be too small to support them; hence their unwillingness to remain on the land, and their efforts to become State functionaries. This is also why the secondary agricultural schools have comparatively few students, the majority of whom become eventually functionaries instead of settling on the land. This explains why the progress of farming has not been commensurate with the strenuous efforts made by the government for its promotion.

A peculiar feature of these holdings is that they are often divided into ten or even more different strips, scattered about in various places, often far apart from one another, and of the most surprising dimensions. Thus a great deal of land is wasted on roads and boundaries. This intense subdivision militates against the introduction of rational methods of cultivation, and causes a huge waste of time to farmers who have to trudge from one strip to another in rotation along pathways which are well nigh impassable after heavy rains. One of the causes which led to the dividing up of the farmstead into several strips was to provide against the danger of loss

AGRICULTURE

by hail which is frequent in Bulgaria. Scattered holdings 241 considerably reduced the risk from such loss, for only 423 some of the strips belonging to one farmstead could be so affected. But this custom has outlived its usefulness, for the State now insures farmers against such loss² at a very slight charge, and it has wisely embarked on a policy of encouraging the unification of holdings; even a law has been passed, rendering this obligatory in any commune, 50% of the inhabitants of which express a desire to have their scattered strips unified. Unfortunately little progress has been made so far in this direction owing to the extreme diversity of the quality of the soil in most localities and to the fact that the peasantry is over-conservative by nature, and this is apparent from the comparatively few farmers who insure against loss by hail. In 1934 their number was stated to be 99,600, the premiums collected 22 million leva, and the disbursements made by the State for losses by hail sustained by 25,000 farmers amounted to 25 millions. The average annual loss caused by hail is estimated at 500 millions. Even as regards their cattle, farmers appear equally conservative, for in 1934 out of a total head of large cattle numbering 3 millions, only 105,000 head of cattle were insured. [657]

If this policy of unifying the scattered strips could be carried through, some 400,000 hectares would be rendered available for cultivation which are now occupied by roads, pathways, boundaries, hedges etc. T. At. Yaranov in his "Bulgaria to-day and to-morrow" estimates the cost of carrying out this unification of the various strips at 1,584 million leva, or roughly at 4000 leva per hectare, and as the actual price of farm land devoted to cereal cultivation averages 5,000 to 8,000¹ leva, the operation would be practicable. The advantages to be derived from

¹ The pre-war price ranged between 1000 to 1500 leva (gold) per hectare.

² [i.e. hail damage,¹⁸¹ see cat. 116, p. 180-181-A.]

BULGARIA-PAST & PRESENT

- 241 423 the application of this measure would be multiple. It would increase the available surface for cultivation by 100%. It would effect a great saving of time to the farmers, who would no longer be obliged to waste their time by visiting scattered holdings, but who would then only have to attend to one. It would permit the rationalisation of agriculture by making feasible the use of agricultural machinery. So far this extreme parcellation of the land has proved an unsuperable obstacle to the employ of modern implements. Thus during the period 1925—1930 some 2620 tractors were bought, at a cost of 1000 million leva, but it has been found impossible to utilise them for ploughing, and the only use they have been put to was to make them work the threshing machines.

However alluring this prospect of regrouping the holdings may be, it is regrettable that it can not be realised for lack of funds. As matters stand an extensive use of expensive agricultural machinery is not likely to prove profitable when there is plenty of cheap labour available and imported oil fuel is dear; besides, the smallholder would scarcely possess sufficient means to acquire them and would not know how to keep them in good condition.¹

- 241 243 The utilisation of machinery on the farms could be lucratively carried out only if it were undertaken on a co-operative basis, but in such a case it would be necessary to found co-operative societies in every village before proceeding with the wholesale employ of machinery. However, even with such improvements, Bulgaria could

¹ During the Liaptchev administration the government undertook to introduce by hook or crook modern machinery, and a large number was foisted on the peasantry but never utilised. Many complaints were made as to the peasantry having been encouraged to run into debt merely in order to buy machines. The exposures made by certain deputies on May 22 and 30, 1932, on this subject are not at all edifying.

AGRICULTURE

not hope to compete in cereal growing with transoceanic countries, and the only advantage to be derived would be to continue raising the same amount of cereals on a more restricted area by employing more advanced methods of cultivation, in order that more land be diverted to other crops demanding more labour and skill.¹ The table on page 184 gives particulars as to the main varieties of cereals cultivated, and their respective yield during the last years

The harvest of 1934 was affected by drought in the early part of the summer, and the yield was considerably under the average of recent years as may be gauged by the following figures:

	Average yield per hectare during 1930-1934	Yield in 1933 per hectare	Yield in 1934 per hectare
Wheat	1157 kg.	1204 kg	902 kg
Rye	1092 "	1180 "	868 "
Mixture of barley and wheat . . .	1228 "	1248 "	993 "
Barley	1240 "	1441 "	806 "
Oats	816 "	983 "	578 "
Maize	1232 "	1309 "	1221 "

¹ Cereal growing is not a remunerative occupation and can only be carried on thanks to the subsidies offered by the State. It has to be carried on however, because Bulgaria can not afford to pay for imported cereals. Their production therefore should be adjusted to local requirements in order to restrict the amount of subsidies disbursed to the minimum.

The cost of wheat may be computed at 2.77 leva per kg., the following items entering into the cost of production per hectare: Ploughing and sowing 2,100, harvesting 300, transport to threshing machine and threshing 400, transport to market 100, seed 250 kg. at 1.25 = 321.25, total 3212.5 leva. Average production per hectare 1157 kg.

In transoceanic countries the cost of production is about 1.25 leva per kg., with a tendency for a further reduction judging from

BULGARIA-PAST & PRESENT

243
433

	Year 1929-30	Year 1930-1	Year 1931-2	Average
North Bulgaria	171.06%	146.01%	110.70%	142.59%
Sofia region	179.90%	158.43%	158.28%	165.53%
South Bulgaria	119.60%	125.60%	186.23%	143.81%

243
453

This of course has been possible owing to the credits which they have been able to raise from the Agricultural Bank, and to their not applying them to the specific purposes for which these loans were granted; the Agricultural Bank having extended to the rural population credits amounting on an average to 7360 leva per hectare for the smaller category of farmsteads. It must not be thought however that the peasantry has been living wastefully, and has run into debt owing to its being profligate. Very often in periods of drought the Agricultural Bank, under pressure from the State, has been compelled to come to the assistance of the peasantry and to supply them with seed and food, practically with no guarantee. This will largely explain the excessive advances which the Bank has made to the rural population, which, if it were not for this timely aid would have literally starved.

241
311

The source of the trouble is that the available land is insufficient to support the population, and that if it be not provided with more land in order to increase its production up to its requirements, or if it be not assisted financially in order to modernise its methods of cultivation, and thus be able to raise a larger quantity of products on the land it actually possesses, there will be grave danger of a dislocation of the present social fabric

241
434

Prof. St. Tsolakov, a colleague of Prof. Dolinski, has published a most interesting essay in the 1934 *Annuaire de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales*, of Varna, on the position of the farmers in the Varna region, and on their indebtedness to the State. It is certainly representative of the whole country, and the study of the figures he supplies will convince any one that the problem

AGRICULTURE

of the reorganisation of agriculture in Bulgaria is a most pressing one if a social upheaval is to be avoided at no distant date.

241
434

Prof. Tsolakov has carefully calculated the revenue of all items of income of farmers from the various cereals, vegetables, fruit, poultry, cattle etc. they raise, as well as the disbursements they make for the purchase of similar articles for their personal requirements in cases where they do not produce one, or several of these articles on their own farms and have to sell certain surpluses, if they have such, in order to buy what they do not produce, and he has come to the conclusion that farmers possessing up to 2 hectares have an annual deficit as regards their needs in agricultural produce of 4,226 leva per farmstead, those possessing 2 to 5 hectares have a surplus of 402 leva, those with 5 to 10 hectares a surplus of 7,103, those with 10 to 15 hectares a surplus of 15,632, and those of over 15 hectares a surplus of 19,919. However, the rural population has other needs besides agricultural produce, which mainly represents food, namely: clothing, light, fuel, etc., and if these requirements be taken into consideration the farmsteads would show the following position as to revenue and expenditure:

Farmsteads up to 2 hectares: Annual deficit 7,226 leva

from 2 to 5	surplus	4,598
5 to 10	surplus	103
10 to 15	surplus	5,632
of over 15	surplus	6,919

As a consequence, farmers have been unable to pay their taxes, or to refund their debts. Prof Tsolakov has appended the results of an examination into the accounts of 487 individual farmsteads in the region of Varna, and gives these most impressive data as to the hopeless position in which the peasantry finds itself. Arrears of unpaid taxes have been accumulating for the past years, and there

241
651
426

BULGARIA-PAST & PRESENT

241 is practically no prospect of their ever being met. The
651 following figures are self-explanatory:
426

Cases	Area of farmsteads	Arrears of taxes 1925-6 to 1932-3	Tax for 1933-4 (for each category of farmsteads)	Fines	Total amount of taxes owing
144	up to 1 hectare	79,943 leva	12,016 leva	10,200 leva	102,150 leva
79	1 to 2 "	97,232 "	20,368 "	20,661 "	138,311 "
75	2 to 3 "	132,317 "	31,883 "	29,498 "	193,698 "
83	3 to 5 "	236,560 "	53,260 "	54,575 "	334,495 "
65	5 to 10 "	229,741 "	75,310 "	49,575 "	354,626 "
33	10 to 20 "	132,250 "	73,650 "	55,799 "	261,699 "
8	over 20 "	241,675 "	32,683 "	126,358 "	400,716 "

The amount of individual indebtedness has also been inquired into, and this has been computed as follows.

Farmsteads of	To Agricultural bank	To Co-operative bank	To the State (taxes mainly arrears)	To Municipal	To Private persons	Total
up to 2 hectares	7,360 ¹	1,710	970	170	12,050	22,260
of 2 to 5 "	3,820	600	530	60	4,410	9,420
" 5 to 10 "	2,930	580	360	50	2,370	6,290
" 10 to 15 "	2,950	440	220	—	1,600	5,210
" over 15 "	2,800	290	400	40	1,190	4,720

From the above data it will be evident that the smaller farmers are hopelessly insolvent since the actual value of arable land is between 5,000 to 8,000 leva per hectare.

241 With regard to the production of cereals Prof. Tso-
511 lakov calculates that the average deficit of farmsteads

¹ According to a statement made in the Sobranie on Feb. 26 1932, peasant indebtedness to the Agricultural Bank amounted to 4,096,043,000 leva at the end of 1931. Farmsteads of 10 hectares owed it 3360 per hectare, and those of 10 hectares and over, 2170 leva per hectare. The total value of the 4,469,987 hectares under cultivation was estimated in 1927 at 83,933,620,000 leva, rural buildings at 34,845 millions, the live stock at 19,927,205,000 leva and agricultural inventory at 4,760,149,000 leva. By 1932 values had fallen by 60%, so that the value of farm property was estimated at only 50,000 millions and the debts of the farmers then amounted at only 12,000 millions. The total revenue from agriculture, had dwindled from 23,347 millions in 1929 to under 13,000 millions in 1930, as the Minister of Agriculture affirmed in the Sobranie on March 6. 1932.

AGRICULTURE

having an area of up to 2 hectares, is 2,510 kg., that of 2 to 5 hectares 1,570 kg., and that of 5 to 10 hectares 149 kg., and he estimates that at the present state of development of agriculture, farmsteads of less than 2 hectares in area can hardly absorb the labour of two persons, those of 2 to 5 hectares of 3 persons, those of 5 to 9 hectares of 4 persons, those of 10 to 30 hectares of 5 persons, and those of over 30 hectares, of 6 persons and over. Consequently there are 1,214,766 persons too many on the land, and it is indispensable to transform agricultural methods to absorb profitably their labour. This could be done by developing orchard and vegetable growing, dairy farming, cattle raising, as well as by the cultivation of industrial and oleaginous plants. Prof. Tsolakov's figures are in no way biased; deputy Dr. Assen Tsanov, affirmed in the Sobranie on May 18 1933, that farmsteads having an area of 5 hectares and under, could not support their owners, that there was a shortage of land, and that this forced the rural population to migrate to the towns where likewise no work could be found for it. In another speech, on March 8 1932, he explained that farmers owning 2 to 6 hectares could barely eke out a living and that they were utterly unable to pay their debts. Farmers and the Agrarian party have been most vociferous in stressing the necessity of bringing down the level of prices of industrial articles to that of the agricultural, for with the fall in price of the latter, the rural population had been precluded from buying even the most indispensable articles for lack of means. A most informative article in the guise of an open letter addressed by a farmer in south-west Bulgaria to the editor of the *Vetser* was published by the latter newspaper on Oct. 1, 1933. The farmer after complaining that peasants had to exchange 2 kg. of grain for a box of matches, 4 kg. of grain for a kg. of salt, 40 kg. of grain for a pair of primitive boots, and that after satisfying

BULGARIA-PAST & PRESENT

241
511 their most essential needs there remained nothing over for the payment of taxes and interest on debts, he proceeded to give a detailed list of the expenditure and revenue of his farm, which had an area of 10 hectares and which he had bought for 200,000 leva in 1927. He had further acquired 2 oxen for 10,000 leva, 1 cow for 6,000 leva, 20 sheep for 10,000 leva, implements for 50,000 leva and had erected a cottage for 5000 leva, bringing up the total amount invested on the farm to 241,000 leva.

Revenue: 4 hectares sown to wheat=600 kg wheat at 1.50 leva=9000 leva

1/2 " " " barley=500 " barley at 1 " = 600 "

1 20 sheep, 600 litres milk at 3 " =1800 "

1 cow 600 " " at 2 " =1200 "

1/10 hectare planted with potatoes=300 kg at 1 " = 300 "

1/10 " " " vegetables = 300 "

3/10 " " sown " sunflower & beet =1800 "

1 " " " hay =1500 "

(4 hectares lying fallow)

Net revenue 16,800 "

Expenditure. Food for family of 5, 1825 kg of grain at 1.50 leva=2738 leva

Corn seed for 4 hectares 1000 kg. " " =1500 "

Threshing 6000 kg wheat = 900 "

" 6000 " barley = 60 "

Milling wheat for food = 436 "

Clothing & boots = 800 "

Light = 400 "

Salt, sugar, rice & wine = 500 "

Soap, brushes etc. = 200 "

Repairs to buildings & instruments =1200 "

Medical assistance = 200 "

School fees & extras = 500 "

Fodder for oxen and cow, 1080 kg. of grain at 1.50 leva =1620 "

" " 20 sheep 3240 kg. of hay at 1 leva =3240 "

Insurance against hail = 720 "

Total disbursements =17,514 "

1 The wool from the sheep was not accounted for as it probably served for making homespun cloth for the farmer and his family. It would have amounted to 46 kg at 40 leva =1840 leva. The quantity would hardly suffice a household of five.

AGRICULTURE

Thus even a farmstead of 10 hectares, according to the above figures showed a deficiency, though it was exploited by its owner and family without any hired labour. And it must be noted that in the above figures no allowance is made either for payment of taxes, debts depreciation or remuneration for labour, and that further, the yield per hectare of wheat is calculated at well over the mean figure attained, this being 1157 kg. per hectare and not 1500 kg. as on this particular farm. No wonder that the land tax fell in arrears, and only yielded a fraction of the 350 million of revenue, which was the annual forecast in the budget. Thus in 1926—7 the yield from it was 187,755,000 leva, in 1927—8, 150 millions, in 1928—9, 32 millions, in 1930—1, 83 millions, until it was finally suppressed in 1932.

The inability of the smaller farmers to provide for their own maintenance was concretely affirmed by Prof. Dolinski, in one of his works published in 1931, when he also asserted that 38·40% of the farmers were only slightly affected by the drop in the prices of cereals. The following figures were given in support, as well as a table showing the distribution of the arable land among farmsteads cultivating cereals. The average monthly consumption of cereals was stated to be 20 kg. per person in the urban districts, and 30 kg. in rural areas. The average farmstead had 5·351 members, and its annual requirements in cereals was 2015·165 kg. The production of cereals per hectare during the quinquennial period 1925—9, averaged 1009 kg. If 153 kg. for seed per hectare were deducted, this left 856 kd., a quantity which was raised from 2·354 hectares. Therefore farmsteads of 2½ to 3 hectares, produced just enough grain for their owners, and had no surplus wherewith to pay taxes and renovate their implements.

BULGARIA-PAST & PRESENT

Categories and numbers of farmsteads		Area owned Hectares	Area devoted so- lely to cereals. Hectares	Perce- tage
Self-sufficing in cereals .	41,297	1,125,443.7	818,798.9	3.64
Buying cereals	236,047	3,050,087.6	2,259,841.1	9.76
Having a surplus of ce- reals	439,235	28,845,318.9	20,064,752.3	86.70

241
648

What has so far been advanced is, it is to be hoped, enough to show that on one hand the lesser farmsteads are scarcely self-supporting and that on the other hand the larger farms, owing to the fall in the price of cereals, are unable to meet their liabilities. If 80% of the population is therefore in such a state of indigence and unable to pay any taxes, one can easily surmise in what poverty the whole nation must be struggling since its entire economic structure is based on agriculture, which has ever been its mainstay. This most regrettable state of affairs is largely due to those who drafted the Peace Treaties. Obviously, it was nothing short of a crime to deprive Bulgaria of such land as was indispensable for her population, and which had been in her possession, or was mainly inhabited by a Bulgarian population, and transfer it to her neighbours, all of whom had received vast increases in territory, and were in no need of further land. This wilful pauperisation of a people which was not only despoiled of its most fertile provinces, but obliged to house and feed some 400,000 destitute refugees, driven away from the territories so thoughtlessly transferred to the neighbouring States, is undoubtedly one of the causes which led the American people to wash its hands off European affairs in disgust, and this may be easily understood, for the American delegation at the Peace Conference in its desire to secure a just and enduring settlement, most sturdily upheld the cause of Bulgaria. Nor can the politicians responsible for these obtuse arrangements of the Peace Treaties plead in extenuation that they were actuated in their drafting by the biblical

000

AGRICULTURE

000 precept of "Unto him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath", which, as far as Bulgaria is concerned, they applied in the letter, for Christian considerations seldom sway them. The present writer well remembers Prof. H. Laski, affirming some fourteen years ago at the London School of Economics, that a certain Cabinet Minister had confided to him, that for ten years he had never heard a Christian thought expressed at the deliberations of the Cabinet (Obviously not a Labour one).

• 24/ Though amputated of her richest cornland, the Dobrudja, which represented 12% of the total cultivated surface of Bulgaria, and accounted for over 20% of her grain exports, as well as of western Thrace, which produced the finest brands of Oriental tobacco, the peasantry reacted, as any vigorous organism would do, and, sought by superhuman efforts to adapt itself as best as it could to its new restrained conditions. It brought into cultivation hilly and less fertile land, and converted into tilled fields crazing land and forest, so that the surface devoted to cereal cultivation which averaged 2,460,447 hectares during the quinquennial period 1908-12, increased to 2,640,003 hectares in 1933. Owing however, to the increase in population, the per capita production of cereals substantially diminished, and consequently the surplus available for export decreased from 609,169 tons in 1914, to some 120,000 tons for the season 1933-4, and even this result was achieved by underfeeding the cattle, which deprived of pasturages, mostly converted into cornfields had to

24/ ¹ Of the total area of Bulgaria, 6,157,000 hectares, was considered as unfit for tillage, the remaining 4,157,620 hectares, was arable land which was utilised as follows in 1933:

Tilled fields	3,220,013 hectares
Fields lying fallow . .	402,920 "
Vineyards & orchards	125,699 "
Natural prairies . . .	307,766 "

BULGARIA-PAST & PRESENT

241 subsist on short rations, being fed on 4800 million kg. of fodder, instead of 12,000 million kg., which quantity is said to represent its normal requirements. The inability to keep up her position as a grain exporting country, constrained Bulgaria likewise to undertake the transformation of her agriculture and to give an impetus to fruit growing and the cultivation of industrial and oleaginous plants. These latter kinds were cultivated during the period 1908/12, in the mean, on an area of 25,759h. a year, while by 1933.¹ This had increased to 154,000 hectares, which were apportioned among the following plants:

	Area in thousand of hectares		Yield in thousand of quintals	
	1933	1934	1933	1934
Rape seed	0.6	16.085	7.543	10.7
Sunflower seed	81	105.123	929.832	980.
Tobacco.	23	19.869	175.140	149.1
Cotton { Seed	20	38	89.607	89.923
staple				
Hemp { seed.	53	5 668	38.940	50.923
filaments			18.291	23.2
Sugar beet	11		22.938	
			1856	31.5
Various	13		58	

248 In the latter figure of 58,000 quintals are included 42,296 quintals of sesame (1934: 27,214) 7,309 quintals of aniseed (1934: 14,178) Flax: 2,798 quintals seed and 864 filaments (1934: 8,556 seed and 5,766 filaments). Opium poppy seed 1,993 quintals (1934: 3,693). Pea nuts 2,862 quintals (1934: 8,514) and a quantity of soya beans, with which 15,500 hectares have been sown in 1935. Cotton seems to be the most promising among the industrial plants, and it is hoped that eventually sufficient will be grown to provide all the

¹ For 1935 the area devoted to them has been increased to 241,777 hectares while the area sown to cereals had decreased to 2,419,377.

AGRICULTURE

cotton needed for local consumption and for the spinning ²⁴⁸ of yarns up to № 24 counts. In 1932, 3,756 tons of raw cotton was imported, plus 6,355 tons of yarn up to 24s. It is reckoned that the annual requirements in cotton and cotton yarn amount to 12,000 tons and that in a couple of years it will be possible to devote some 60,000 hectares to cotton growing in order that Bulgaria might dispense with the importation of cotton, cotton yarns up to 24s and most cotton textiles as are made from such yarns. It is believed that by a rational utilisation of the existing 82,514 spindles and 3,218 cotton weaving looms, no new machinery will be required. The cotton grown in Bulgaria is a short staple variety of an average length of staple of 21 millimetres and 0.0218 millimetres in thickness and in this it resembles Indian cotton. The yield per hectare is 200 to 220 kg. which also corresponds to the mean Indian yield of 86 lbs to the acre. It is a much more remunerative crop than cereals for the government fixed a buying price of 30 to 34 leva¹ per kg, which allows for a return to the farmer of 200 kg $\times$ 30 leva = 6000 leva, plus 400 kg. of cotton seed $\times$ 2 leva = 800 leva, or a total of 6,800 leva per hectare, from which some 700 leva should be deducted for the cost of ginning and 50 kg. for seed $\times$ 2 leva = 100 leva, leaving a revenue of 6,000 leva per hectare, which on an average is three times as much as that from most cereal crops². The cultivation of cotton however, can only be carried out in certain regions, mainly in south Bulgaria, and entails more labour than cereal

¹ The price of foreign cotton at about 6 per lb. If imported in Bulgaria would correspond to 36-38 leva a kg. for its cost would have been increased by 50% to 55% owing to the premium which would have to be paid on foreign currency and other expenses.

² The gross revenue per hectare of the various plants, based ²⁴¹ on the prices prevailing during 1932 was calculated to be: wheat: 2561 leva, maize: 1629, sunflower seed: 2096, Cotton: 5147, Flax: 8552, Hemp: 4355, Sugar beet: 10,066.

BULGARIA-PAST & PRESENT

244
167 accomplish was done by Bulgarian gardeners. Ten years ago no one among us knew that it was possible to produce tomatoes, peppers and other vegetables in our land. To-day, however, this is a fact, thanks to the ingenuity of the Bulgarians".

244
439 Of fresh vegetables 55 truck loads were exported in 1933 to Central Europe, and of these the most appreciated were the tomatoes grown in south Bulgaria, which many experts affirm to surpass in quality even those of Italy. During the summer of 1935 some 2750 tons of fresh tomatoes were exported to Central Europe. No serious efforts have been made to develop the export of tinned vegetables, though in price they are 50% cheaper than similar ones sold in France, and in every respect as good. Lack of capital, and of commercial connections abroad have prevented the few canning factories to launch in a forward policy which necessarily involves risks and losses at the start. The only leguminous plant which has been exported on a large scale was haricot beans, of which Bulgaria was always a large exporter, the high quality of this product having secured for her a certain preeminence among Near Eastern countries. The area devoted to this crop was 73,162 hectares and the yield 74,677,000 kg. in 1933 of which 32,568 tons were exported. The area planted with pulse, vegetables, potatoes and that set aside for market gardening was estimated respectively at 95,000, 13,500, 14,000, and 38,000 hectares in 1932.

241
312 A great impediment to the steady development of agriculture in Bulgaria is the periodic drought which completely undermines the economic position of the small holders, which even without this scourge, is never too bright. The mean annual rainfall for the period 1920-1930 was 578.2 litres per square metre, but this unfortunately is not evenly apportioned, the mountainous western and south western parts of the country having a much hea-

AGRICULTURE

vier rainfall than the eastern part, in which the rainfall is 241 •
 often deficient. For this reason schemes for storing up 312
 rain water which is carried off too rapidly by the rivers
 without benefitting sufficiently agriculture have always
 engaged the attention of Bulgarian agriculturists and en-
 gineers. One of the latter, M. I. I. Mavrov prepared a com-
 prehensive survey which was published at the expense of
 the government, in which full details are given as to the
 possibilities of regulating the water supply. 250,000 hec-
 tares could be brought under irrigation in the bassin of
 the Martsa, 150,000 hectares in the region of Stara Zagora,
 Sliven and Yambol, 100,000 hectares in the neighbour-
 hood of Kustendil, Radomir and Dubnitsa, and smaller
 areas in the valleys near Zlatitsa. Kazanlik, Gorna-Oreh-
 vitsa, as well as a large part of the Danubian plain By
 constructing dams and correcting the channels of the Ma-
 ritsa, Tundja, Isker and Yantra rivers. these could be ren-
 dered navigable for a part of their courses, and hydraulic
 energy of about 2,300,000 H. P. could be rendered avail-
 able, which could be utilised for the production of cal-
 cium carbide, aluminium, (bauxite is found in the Rho-
 dopes) nitrates and the delopment of a wood-pulp in-
 dustry. Since the publication of this work, the subject of
 irrigation has often been discussed, and less ambitious
 plans have been put forward. In 1926, the American Yulen
 Co., offered to construct a dam on one of the affluents
 of the Maritsa at a cost of 1200 million leva which would
 have provided enough water to irrigate 130,000 hectares,
 but negotiations fell through. Actually the possibility of
 irrigating some 21,000 hectares by constructing two dams
 to store up the waters of the Mutavir and Luda-Yana,
 two small tributaries of the Maritsa, is being closely stu-
 died, and as this undertaking would only cost about 250
 million leva it is possible that it might materialise, for it
 is reckoned that the yield of irrigated land increases three

BULGARIA-PAST & PRESENT

241 fold, and its market value fourfold which would render the
312 execution of this plan profitable. In south Bulgaria two
crops instead of one could be grown annually on irrigated
land which moreover would be safeguarded against dro-
ught. The Ministry of public works also contemplates the
harnessing of the river Ossem in north Bulgaria, that some
42,000 hectares may be irrigated in the region of Lovets.
This scheme would render available hydraulic energy to
the amount of 38,000 H. P. which could be utilised for
pumping water from the Danube and in order to water
certain parts of the Danubian plain. A smaller scheme,
that of bringing about 6000 hectares under irrigation near
Nevrokop, in south western Bulgaria, by utilising the river
Mesta is also receiving attention and will be carried out in
the near future. From a close study of the data collected,
it would appear that the irrigation of south Bulgaria is
quite feasible and economically sound. The difficulty which
stands in the way is the remuneration of the capital
invested in the undertaking which could be secured under
the present circumstances only by payment in kind, a con-
sideration which is likely to discourage would-be promoters.

312 Concerning irrigation and water-adduction plans, it
would be pertinent to mention the efforts which have
been made to supply the waterless area of the Deli Orman
in north-eastern Bulgaria with a supply of water. In this
area of some 600 square klm. wholly devoid of springs
and rivers, a network of water mains has been recently
laid in order to supply some 569 villages with water, a
considerable achievement in view of the financial stress in
which the country finds itself. A similar noteworthy work
was the adduction of water from the Rila mountains to
Sofia, a distance of 82 klm. at a cost of 740 million leva
completed in 1933; the difference of altitude being utilised
to generate electric energy of 15,000 H. P.

231 Cattle raising and aviculture are fairly well developed,
eggs figuring after tobacco as the second item on the list

133



TSAM KORJA

• 241



A PLOUGHMAN

[Facing p. 385]

- 342 and the stables; in the mountains there are usually structures with many stories. Formerly the windows used to have wooden sashes that ran along a groove and that one could slide to the side, in place of window
- 262 panes. The style of life is simple; in the country the herders were often contented with sour milk, and the farmers with maize and millet beer.
- 231 The raising of livestock specializes in cattle, sheep, and goats, and
[221] takes place in the form of a migratory herding system, which commutes back and forth between the mountains in the summer and the plains
- 241 in the winter. The agriculture produces wheat, maize, barley, and rye, and in the temperate, nay, even hot, South, it cultivates rice, cotton, and sesame; from here, too, come the olive trees, the citrous
- 412 trees, and the chestnut trees. The hand mill is mostly used only for salt, other kinds of primitive tools have scarcely been preserved. The threshing sled (Figure 9) came from the Orient; it is made of hard planks that have been bent upward at the front and into which sharp-edged fire-stones have been forced. When it is in use it is weighted down enough by the stones and by the weight of the leader to be able to press out the ears of grain. The rattle board (Figure 15) has its counterparts all over ancient Europe. The sawing frame of the wandering wood cutters is an original invention. It includes a box filled with stones which is fastened by two rods and revolves around a horizontal axis, so that by its weight it supports the backward movement of the
- 291 saw. Through the universal joy in colors and in ornaments the national dress displays a great deal of variety. The basic elements of the men's clothing are a long, rough shirt with a wide cut which is embroidered with colored wool along the chest opening and along the shoulder; cloth or leather trousers, pleated in the Turkish manner in the east, in the west evenly tight-fitting, with a long woollen waistband; and legging-like calf cloths, as well as sandals; a sleeveless jacket or coat-like upper garment with wool trimmings and laces; a sheep's fur or hooded mantle; a dark and low lambskin cap. The women wear blouses with embroidered and crocheted ornamentation, skirts with belts, firmly woven, embroidered apron skirts, sleeveless vests or sleeve jackets, kerchiefs, headdresses and garlands around their fore-
- 302 heads with fringe bands covered with coins and hanging far down. The
- 301 girls wear their hair in from 20 to 30 tresses which are held together just below shoulder level by means of chains or buckles with silver coins and pearls, and which, at the end, are gathered together into one single tress (Figure 1). They also have costly ornaments of little gold and silver plates, as well as of filigree work for which the threads were formerly often taken from ancient coins.
- *[see 1: Karutz, E1 Europe, cat. 116, p. 59a---Analyst]

Bulgaria EEI

216]

TITO AND GOLIATH

665 Labor Party, are on the way to Socialism and endeavoring to reach it in a peaceful way. . . . I should like to tell our English friend that we too feel that it is quite possible in Bulgaria, granted the work and necessary preparations, to pass on to Socialism some day without dictatorship of the proletariat, on the basis of democracy and a parliamentary régime.

Now, however, the British Labor Party had become a horde of imperialist hyenas, lackeys of Wall Street. Now Socialism was to be attained in Bulgaria not in a peaceful parliamentary way but by force. To make sure that his audience would swallow this strong meat Dimitrov threw in the ominous warning that the program had been developed under the guidance of Stalin himself; he "personally" had helped with advice and explanations so that any "mistakes" which were made could be "corrected quickly."

The Dimitrov talk, though derided in Yugoslavia as postponing indefinitely the advent of Socialism, nevertheless gave notice that the proletarian revolution would now be pushed in Bulgaria by all means and at all costs. Applied to the agrarian problem, it meant that the class war was to begin in earnest in the villages. Collectivization had not proved any more popular with Bulgarian peasants than it had in other agricultural countries. Even at their face value, the official figures of progress in forming collectives (more delicately called "working agricultural enterprises") were not impressive. And one hesitates to accord them face value because of the ample opportunity and great temptation to juggle statistics. Changes are made frequently in the rules for membership, the presidents of village councils (soviets) are desperately anxious to make a good showing in their reports to Sofia, and the Minister of Agriculture himself hopes to save his skin by reporting progress to Moscow.

474
241
423 At the end of 1948, according to a published Soviet source, 73,000 Bulgarian peasant households owning 300,000 hectares of land were joined in 1,000 agricultural coöperatives (collectives); and by August 1, 1949, the figures had become 146,583 households, owning 538,458 hectares, in 1,594 coöperatives.³ Writing in the official Cominform journal in November 1949, T. Chernokolev, a member of the

³ N. Vorobyev, *New Times*, Moscow, September 7, 1949.

Bulgaria EE1

PRESCRIPTION: FORCE

- [217

Bulgarian Politburo, reported that the number of peasant households had recently reached 147,000 (13.3 percent of all households), the amount of land involved was now 540,000 hectares (11.2 percent of all cultivated land), and the total of coöperatives was 1,600.⁴ Soon after Vulko Chervenkov became Prime Minister⁵ he revealed that at the end of the first quarter of 1950 the number of coöperative organizations had increased by only 33 over the figure given previously, and that the number of peasant families involved had grown by only about 28,000.⁶

474
241
423

This unsatisfactory organizational progress was matched by production failures. The government organ, *Otechestven Front*, complained on March 27, 1949, that spring sowing quotas which should already have been completed were fulfilled only 56 percent for wheat, 45 percent for rye, 55 percent for barley and 51 percent for oats. It called these figures "extremely disquieting."⁷ The results were noticed in the failure of the peasants to meet their wheat and rye requisition quotas in the autumn. Quotas were fulfilled or overfulfilled in districts bordering the Black Sea or Rumania, i.e. where Soviet pressure was most direct, but in districts towards Yugoslavia they were fulfilled only from 20 to 27 percent and in the three districts of Bulgarian Macedonia 59, 54 and 20 percent respectively. The correspondent of *The Economist* (London, November 5, 1949) who reported these figures remarked that "clearly, the 'Tito influence' does exist in Bulgaria, and especially in Bulgarian Macedonia." In the spring of 1950 the same pattern was repeated. Gaston Coblenz gave quotations from *Rabotnichesko Delo* and other Sofia newspapers calling attention to "disastrous" failures in agricultural production, "disgraceful episodes" where village councils showed "open opposition" to the mechanization of agriculture (an indirect way of saying that they opposed the collective farms), and so on. The spring plowing, supposed to be completed by March 8, was

474
241

⁴ *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy!*, Bucharest, November 18, 1949.

⁵ On February 1, 1950, Chervenkov succeeded Vasil Kolarov, who had died January 23. Chervenkov, who was Dimitrov's brother-in-law, had spent many years in Moscow.

⁶ Harry Schwartz, *The New York Times*, May 18, 1950.

⁷ Quoted by Michael Padev, *Manchester Guardian*, August 16, 1949.

218]

TITO AND GOLIATH

474
241 completed only 15 percent on time, and the spring sowing 10 percent.⁹

474
565
661 The amount of compulsory self-criticism ensuing on such events, and the number of purges and trials of officials and arrests and trials of *kulaks*, bourgeois "saboteurs" and other criminals, can be imagined. In the article already quoted, Mr. Chernokolev admitted that there had been "serious mistakes" even in administering the comparatively moderate Bulgarian collectivization program, with the result that many "injustices" had occurred. Party organizations had failed to gauge correctly what was technically possible, people who owned land without actually working it had been admitted to collectives, even *kulaks* had been taken in, and so on. When lands were exchanged so that practicable coöperative farms might be organized, peasant rights often were "grossly violated." *Kulak* elements "took advantage of this and in a number of cases tried hard to win to their side the disgruntled poor and medium peasants and endeavored to turn them against the coöperatives and the people's power." They not only tried, apparently, but succeeded, for in some villages, the writer records, they fomented "strife between coöperative members and individual peasants," which "created a certain danger for the alliance between the working class and the poor and medium peasants."

Since the Cominform journal is designed for an international audience these comments were more moderate than those made on the spot. In a speech before the Central Committee of the Party in June 1949, Kolarov spoke of "clearly unreasonable and unfair" measures taken against the peasants; of many peasants being forced to join collectives against their will; and of peasants being indifferent to whether crops were big or small, the quota to be sold to the state at a fixed price being much too high—in some cases even comprising the total harvest.⁹

Kolarov put the blame for all that had gone wrong in the countryside on Kostov. So did Chervenkov. So did the Bulgarian press. So did the Committee which investigated Kostov's activities for the Grand National Assembly. It reported that besides the crimes de-

⁹ *New York Herald Tribune*, April 16, 1950.

⁹ Quoted in *The Economist*, London, July 16, 1949.